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If you have corrections or questions, you may contact me at daxingdan@gmail.com
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Chapter 1: Nico's Secret Measurements

Thud, thud, thud.

Heavy footsteps resound resound as I dash out of the seniors' classroom and up the stairs.

"Huh? Nico-chan, where are you going? Class is about to-"

A classmate calls out to me.

Thud, thud, thud.

But I don't have time for that right now!
Wait... no, I take that back.
It's exactly at times like these that I have to break out the Nico-nii smile.

"Thanks, I know! I just need to do something!"

I run like the wind, leaving only my voice behind.
So cool ♡
That's Nico-niicchi, the super popular idol who's always around to give others a smile, no matter how busy she is ♪
Maybe now they'll become my fans too?
Tee hee hee ♡

As I run up the stairs, I clutch my chest... Crunch.
Oops.
The folded sheet of paper I'd pressed up against myself... The long awaited article that would foretell my destiny... and I'd crumpled it!
Oh crap, what now?
I spare no effort in trying to flatten out the A4 size sheet of paper.
Hm, it's a bit wrinkled now. Oh well.

I continue up the staircase, and bang ♪
The clear blue sky greets me once I throw the door open.
The rooftop, completely deserted.

Ah, skipping class feels so good!
At that moment, I started to calm down.
And, step by step,
I walk out to the middle of the roof
And drop to the floor, cross-legged.
Woah there, I can't just let my guard down because I'm alone. I straighten out the hem of my skirt. After all, I'd be in huge trouble if someone caught that on one of those cutting-edge telephoto lenses.
Exclusive Exposé! What Lies Beneath Up-and-Coming School Idol Nico-nii's Skirt!?
As if ♡
Or maybe something like this?
Undercover Scoop! Chart-topping School Idol Nico-nii's Secret Three Sizes, an Impressive-
Haah.
Once I think of that, I let out a sigh.

Rustle, rustle.
I unfold the newly-updated document in my hands, the one that shall reveal to me the path my life shall take: my physical exam results.

Class 3C, #29: Nico Yazawa.
And beneath that...

image: http://imgur.com/BmzSNBj

Ohhhhhh.
My shoulders go slack.
Those expressionless numbers sit before my eyes.
71.

Ughhh.
Sure, I'd seen it coming,
But still, I'd kinda gotten my hopes up.
I mean, you never know, right?
At age 18, I'm technically still growing.
As a girl, our biggest growth spurts are supposed come around this time. In fact, if you look at the many idols, you can see massive changes in their face, their body, and their general image going from age 18 to 19. In my opinion, at least.

From my results as a prolific Idol Watcher, the girls who become the centers for popular groups usually make their debut at 14 or so, and then make it big at 15 or 16.
By around 18, those pretty girls lose that innocent look and start looking like adults, and they instantly go from working in ads for candy or soft drinks to appearing at events for big corporations and stuff, and then finally, the best of the best win the teen division Diamond Award and enter the mainstream! That's the best way for an idol to go, I think.
Yeppers.

Ah, but what do I do about this?

71cm
My bust...
It hasn't grown a single millimeter over the past year.
Looking down at my chest, hidden under my bright pink school sweater and the dark green tie, I can't see even a hint of cleavage.
Waaah, I'd already added 3 cm to my μ's official profile, but that's just a total lie now!
What to do?
Is this why they invented the phrase, "cooking the numbers"?
Aghhh.
My voice hasn't changed, and I've never once experienced a growth spurt. In fact, when we'd line up by height back in elementary school, I'd usually be taller half of the line. Then, every year, I'd move a little bit forward, and now, I'm practically at the very front!
The fresh, 18-year-old Nico Nico Nii.
Maybe... my real growth spurt hasn't come yet?
Can... can that really happen!?
As I cock my head in consideration,
A voice comes from behind.

"Ohhh! It's Nico-chan! You skipping class!?" says the loud voice ringing through my ears.
Who's there!? Who'd be so crazy as to make such a scene when she knows someone's trying to skip?
With a furrowed brow... No, stop right there!
I can't let anyone catch me with my brow furrowed. Not on my life.
Nico-nii is a radiant idol angel who's always got a smile on her face.
As I wipe the annoyance from being called out off of my face,
I turn around to check who's there.

"Oh, Rin-chan and Kayochin."
With a wide smile and her arms stretched out like an airplane, Rin-chan runs towards me, followed by her long-time friend, Hanayo-chan.
The first underclassman clubmates Nico's had in her life ♡
Rin-chan's carrying a big bag of some snack food, while Hanayo-chan's carrying a lunchbox...?
What??
I never took them for the type to skip class for munchies.
Rin-chan hums as she lands next to me with a smile.
"We freshies don't have a 6th period class now that we're done with with our measurements. The kids without clubs already went home, while we came up to wait for practice to start ☆"

"Here, we can eat so our stomachs won't start rumbling during practice."

I see.
And she continues,

"What's this? What are you reading, Nico-chan? Did you get some info on a new school idol?"

Rin-chan looks over at my physical exam sheet with anticipation.

"Woah, woaaaaaah! I-it's nothing! Nothing at all! It's just some handout from school that I was holding on to-"

I don't even know what I'm saying anymore as I take the physical exam sheet and hide it behind my back. Rin-chan gives me a smirk.

"Oh, I see. Didn't do so well on your last test? I'll bet you didn't study for it one bit! We've been so busy practicing with μ's, after all. I know how you feel. It's like, before you know it, it's the night before test day, and though you want to stay up to study, the harder you focus, the sleepier you get! Yay, you and I are two of a kind!"

I'd rather not be two of a kind with you.
As that thought goes through my head, I fire back
"Oh, come on! It's not a test! Aw, this sucks! I'd finally gotten some time to myself to plan out my future growth as an idol..."

Before I could finish my thought...
Woah.
A massive pair of breasts sat down in front of me.
The irritating sight of a blue school sweater, insufficient to conceal the jiggling of the masses beneath, blocks my vision.
This is beyond cleavage. What's the best way for me to classify the object before me?
A mountain range?
The summit?
Perhaps Cape Canaveral would be more appropriate. They look like they could fire their engines and lift off at any moment. It almost makes me want to reach out for them, but I snap myself out of it.

Smile.
As I raise my eyes, I see Hanayo-chan, sitting delicately with her knees together, giggle.
"So the seniors got measured at noon? Oh, but first, are you hungry, Nico-chan? You can have one of my rice balls if you want ♪ I used the special kelp and seafood mix today..."

As she speaks, she cheerfully produces a gigantic riceball from her lunchbox, totally blackened with dried seaweed.
Why does it have eyes?

"I made it into a soot sprite, tee hee hee ♡"

Oh. Like the ones in Totoro.

I'm wasn't exactly sure why, but at that moment, I felt like I was helplessly defeated.

Obviously, there was that thing about her bust, but also... that rice ball.
She held before me a rice ball nearly the size of my own head. And she'd brought three of them. (When I asked her later, she shyly told me one was a spare, but at any rate, it's not normal to keep spare riceballs in your lunchbox.)

I don't have a large appetite in the first place, so I don't think I could never eat something that big. And I don't have the time to make lunches in the likeness of cartoon characters in the morning, either.
And what's more, if 6th period's starting right about now... didn't they just have lunch?

Absolutely unbelievable. I felt powerless.
Argh.
Do I have to eat that much to get bigger breasts after all?
Hanayo-chan's two years younger than me, too.
Seeing my shoulders slump in disappointment, Hanayo was taken aback.

"Oh, sorry... do you dislike dried seaweed? I personally think it's not a real riceball unless it's nearly overflowing with the stuff, but my granny would scold me, saying that if I ate too much, I'd get all plump..."

As if by instinct, I take ahold of Hanayo-chan's hands and blurt out,

"Dried seaweed!? Is that your secret!? Is dried seaweed the secret to your voluptuous, much-envied boobs!?

I might have looked a bit too desperate.

"She said I'd get all plump, a-and hairy-"

Maybe the pressure was too much, as Hanayo-chan started to lose her voice. Then Rin joined in.

"What do we have here? Rin likes dried seaweed too ♡ It goes great with tonkotsu ramen!"

You're just as flat as me either way.
Ah, no, as I look at her chest... Curse you! She might have a bit more volume than me. Oh.
Then a stroke of genius strikes me.
"Hey, Rin-chan, Rin-chan, you've known Hanayo-chan since you were kids, so that means you've seen how she's progressed over time, right?"
"S-sure..."
Rin-chan looks slightly startled as she replies.
Oh come on! You don't have to be so scared just because I've come up with an idea ♡

I stood up.
"Good! Then I need to interview you as the world's leading expert on Hanayo-chan! Now, about Hanayo's boobs... just when did they get so big? Surely it wasn't in

elementary school, was it? I mean, she looks like a late bloomer, and she's not all that tall, either. So was there any food she suddenly began to like around the time her boobs started growing? Or some other cause? If it was because of dried seaweed, did she suddenly start to like dried seaweed around then, or was there some other reason..."

As I pause to think, I feel like I may have jumped the gun there.
If I just barrage Rin-chan with questions...

Rustle rustle rustle.

"Aaaaaah!"

With stars in her eyes, Rin-chan snatches the physical exam sheet that I'd protected so well out of my lap.

"Nooooo! You don't look at that! Stooop!"

Nico-nii's death throes.

Rin-chan cocks her head as if she doesn't realize what's so private, and then gasps. She claps her hands once.

"Your bust! I see! Your bust's in the 70's! Hooray! I knew we were two of a kind ♡! We're small-bust buddies! It's too bad we don't have the same impact Kayochin ahd Nozomi-chan have, but at least it's easier for us to dance, right ♪?

She speaks gleefully as she holds her hands up for a high five.
Hey, I didn't ask for this!

Blushing, I look away...
But I give her the high five. Not like I have a say in the matter.
It's time to get serious.

"Sure, it might be easier to dance, but we're idols, you know? We've gotta do swimsuit photoshoots, and it's vital that we look good in what we wear! Frills look better with the volume that a good chest has, and if you can show a bit of cleavage, then it's all the better! And most of all, idols need a proper bust to get noticed in the first place!

Rin-chan pricks up her ears, and turns still.
I'm sure images of Nozomi and Hanayo-chan's breasts are going through her head right now.

"Right? Right, right, right, right? Of course, it might be hard to change your figure that much by now, but you still want to get into the 80's, just like any other girl in the world, don't you? I wanna advance to an AA cup at the very least! You're a freshman so you can still wait and hope nature takes its course, but I'm already a senior! I don't have any time left!"

I transition out of the high five, holding her hands in mine as I earnestly reason with Rin-chan. She begins to think with a strangely serious look on her face.

"Hmmm, true enough. Everyone thinks I'm boyish, but maybe if my boobs grow out a bit more, I'll start to appear more girl!"

Yay, it worked ♡

I've successfully recruited Rin-chan ♪

Now that I've gotten her childhood friend Rin-chan with me, Hanayo-chan's gonna have to show us the secret to her knockers!
You can't keep a secret from me ♪
But she doesn't even give me time to finish my thoughts.

"Come on, Hanayo! Hit us with your best ideas for Nico-Rin's 'Mission: Breast Growth!' "

"Wait, aren't the two of you best friends? And you're telling me you don't have an idea what the key to Hanayo-chan's boobs might be?"

"Not the slightest!"

Her swift response lowers my hopes. However,

"I... I wouldn't know anything about that eith-"

Hanayo-chan's trembling response was well within my calculations. We'll just ignore it for now.

"Really!? Then you'll just have to let Nico-nii, with the supervision Rin-chan, figure it out ♡! I'm sure the secret to Hanayo's sweater puppies lies within her daily routine! You have my word that I will not rest until we pin it down!"

I declare with my hand raised to the sky. Rin-chan happily jumps up with me

"I'm not gonna get left behind either ☆♪♯"

Hanayo-chan seems to be struck speechless.
At any rate, it just wouldn't do if I asked my fellow seniors Nozomi-chan or Eli-chan.
That's why I'll be needing your cooperation ♡

We don't have a second to waste. First we write down notes no. 1 and 2.
Image: http://i.imgur.com/1YBKJby.png

♡♡♡♡♡♡

Afterwards, Rin-chan and I tailed Hanayo-chan and began imitating her lifestyle.

Wherever our instructor, Hanayo-chan, goes the two of us follow, single file!
If she covers her head, Rin-chan and I cover ours as well. If Hanayo-chan turns around, the two of us follow suit.
As they say, monkey see, monkey do ♡

When Hanayo-chan slacks off in the hallways, the two of us force ourselves to sit still with her, and when she trips and flashes her panties while changing from her uniform into her practice clothes, the two of us flash ours as well.

Giggle ♡
Hanayo-chan's wearing panties printed with small spring flowers.
Rin-chan's panties are aqua blue with a showy Spongebob design.
And Nico's are... Woah there, that's far beyond top secret information! Not even the president can know. It's meant for Nico's eyes only ♪

Then, at last...

All of a sudden, Hanayo-chan begins to stand pidgeon-toed, fidgeting with her face red. Without saying a word, she turns around and makes a break for it.

"Oh no! Kayochin's trying to shake us off! It's finally time for the big climax! We're about to discover the secret rituals she used to make her boobs so big!"

Rin-chan's eyes glittered with the same light of realization as mine

"Wow! We've been friends for so long, but I've never known about this! Once I learn this secret, our friendship will advance to a whole new level♪!"

The two of us, the would-be Holmes and Dr. Watson pair, give fervent chase to Hanayo-chan, who leads us to...

A pair of large double doors set with glass, and shining white tiles.
And the sound of dripping water.
This is...
"The restroom..."
Oh, is that it...?

The two of us ponder whether to follow her inside, but, as neither of us need to go, we end up waiting outside.

"You don't think she's doing some secret ritual in the toilet, do you?"
"No, I think that's a bit too out there. Kayochin used to be too scared to go to the bathrooms alone, after all. I don't think it's a place she'd enjoy being in ☆"
Nico nico, nya-nya.
As we speak, along come...

"Huh? What are you doing out here? We're about to start practice..."
It's Umi-chan, her face as diligent, her voice as elegant as ever. Accompanying her is Kotori-chan.
"What a relief, I was looking for you because I was worried the freshmen might

forget and go home ♡"
Kotori-chan's got both hands full with bags of what looks like clothes, but her smile's so relaxing nonetheless!

Ah, if only I had a smile like that. It would be such a powerful asset to my idol career.

"You don't have to worry about that! We're going through Ms. Kayochin's breast growth class right now♪! We've been following her the whole time, researching what she does to make her boobs grow so big! Pretty cool, huh? Then, she started running away all of a sudden, so Nico-chan was like, 'Woah, is it time to learn her secret!?' and followed her to the toilets. Now we're taking a little break while we wait for her to come out"

Not good.
I see Umi-chan's mood darken.
I turn around with a swoosh.
Acting like I just heard someone call my name.
I need to get away.

I hear the flush of a toilet,
And out comes Hanayo-chan

"Hanayo-chan..."
Kotori-chan calls out to her worriedly, and Hanayo-chan looks as if she's about to cry.

"K... Kotori-chan... I don't really know any secrets to make my boobs any bigger... Those two just suddenly started to..."

Her face is beet red.
Her eyes start getting misty.
And Umi-chan is trembling as if she's about to blow a fuse.

"Nico! Rin! What are you two doing!?"

Eek! S-sorry!
But this, too, is a vital part of idol research!
As I yell, I grab Rin-chan's hand and hightail it outta there!

If nothing else, my running legs are one thing I have confidence in ♡

♡♡♡♡♡

And so...
Nico's Breast Enlargement Project went on temporary hiatus.
I'm still real caught up on Hanayo-chan's large, soft boobs... but, now that I think about it, Hanayo-chan just has that sort of build, with more volume all-around, right?
I feel like I'm a bit different.

Which is why...
Tee hee hee ♡
Though Umi-chan was mad at me back then, I got a good look.
At Kotori-chan's squishy breasts as she held those bags of clothing against her chest, that is ♡♡♡
Though she's busty too, she's not quite the same as Hanayo-chan or Nozomi-chan. In fact, I'd say she's the thin, slender type, right?
Just like me ♡

Alright, tomorrow, I'm gonna give her a thorough investigation and figure out the secret behind her boobs!
Just 9 more centimeters until my poor little 71-cm chest enters the 80's.
I'm not gonna give up, no matter what the cost!

So, wait just a bit longer ♡
Kotori-chan's gonna be my next target ♪

Comments ♡ Umi
Give me a break. Nico's the oldest member of μ's, but she's always starting something when she's with Rin and Hanayo. Nothing good can come out of that! Like, they're so pure and impressionable, so you shouldn't trouble them, right? Nico's simple attitude may be suited for idol work, but there's a time and place for everything. As for breasts... well, there's nothing wrong with being small, is there? That's one thing we have in common ♡

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If you have corrections or questions, you may contact me at daxingdan@gmail.com
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Chapter 2: Blog Discovered!

Blog header image: http://i.imgur.com/nSuBLGU.jpg
♥ More Practice Today!

We practiced up until the end of the school day again!

Nico-nii's all tired out ♥

But, despite working for so long, everyone's eyes are still shining as always ★
Glittering like the stars in the night sky ★
Nico-nii's still radiating energy too ♥

Come to think of it,
It's already been two months since I've started working as a school idol.

Back then, people were like, are you giving up your dreams of becoming a true idol and settling for just being a school idol!?

Everyone was so worried.

But I'll be fine!

I'm gonna be a genuine idol! The best idol in the world! That's always been, and always will be, my dream ♥

But right now, I'm still in high school,
They say, like, the skilled falcon hides its dreams, right?
[Alteration of a Japanese proverb: the skilled falcon hides its talons]

Anyways, school idols are the big thing right now, aren't they?
I thought that following the trend and just making my debut first would be a good idea ♥

And working with the rest of the group's a lot of fun too ♥♥♥

Plus, I just know that this is gonna help me get my name out to the world

Like maybe I'll get a role on a TV documentary titled something like "Urban Underpopulated Areas: The Girls Who Dream of Being Idols."

And of course, Nico-nii's gonna be the main heroine!
After all, as a character, I stand out the most, and to be blunt, I'm the cutest one ♪♪♪

See, like, I go to a smalltime school,
and there's no telling how well we'll do as school idols,
But working with μ's is kinda like the first step to my advancement.
This, too, is part of the Nico-nii Idol Strategy!

So, there's nothing to worry about! Just keep on cheering me on!

Love ♥
Nico-nii
And to the world, Love♥Nico!

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There.
Hmmm.
I wonder how everyone thought of that?

Today, I arrived to the club room early, and checked the comments section on my blog.
This is my secret.
My hidden idol blog, which I'd started back when I was a high school freshman.

When I was 15 years old, I'd hoped to start school at UTX in the spring, but not even that little dream came true. I was quite put off.
UTX, which had recently opened up near my house, had its own private theatre, and several top idols were a part of its performing arts department. It was the perfect fit for someone aspiring to become an idol, like myself. However, my poor, run-of-the-mill family could never afford to send me to such a fancy private school.
Ever since my elementary school days, I'd always wanted to become - No, known that I'd become - an idol, but due to cruel fate, an unfortunate family background, and unlucky auditions...

Waaaah!
Just because of a bit of bad luck, I couldn't even take a single step towards becoming an idol, and ended up going to Otonokizaka Academy. It made me panic a bit.
I wanted to be an idol, but I also wanted to have a high school life.
But when the day finally came, it just had to be Otonoki, a boring local high school with only six classes total for all its students.
No guys, no idol club either, and all the girls who go there are like, yawn.
They're all cuties ♪ ... but to be honest,

I felt it was boring somehow.
That I had to do something.
At first, I panicked.

While working a part-time job, my 15-year-old, idol-aspiring self started my idol research dream blog.
Unexpectedly, I got a bunch of regulars who checked in every day, and became relatively popular. Great success ♡
See, I'm total idol material after all, aren't I?
If I can get this popular just by blogging, then there's no doubt that the moment I make my debut as a celeb, I'm gonna go straight to the top!
Sheesh, all those traditionalist talent agencies just don't understand my true value. Still, I'm the one the times have chosen ♡
Now I've really gotta give it my all ♪

And so.
In secret,
I scrolled throw my blog, alone, in the club room.

"Oh, wow! I've got so many supportive comments ♡"
Pleased, I sat down in a nearby chair. Even if I'm a part of μ's now, I've still gotta treasure my longtime fans.

"What's this? 'I love how you work with all your heart, no matter where you are'? Teeheehee ♡ I know, right? Despite all appearances, I'm actually a pretty hard worker. And this one says, 'Hope you advance past being a smalltime school idol and stand onstage at UTX! I'm rooting for you'? Hmm, well, I'm thankful for the support, but frankly, transferring to UTX doesn't seem to be within the realm of possibility."

I was quite enjoying myself, tapping my feet on the desk.

That's why I didn't even notice when the door leading into the room opened.

"What!? 'Gotta be thankful for all the others acting as your stepping stones! I'm eagerly waiting for some of your intimate documents. I hope it'll be a bathing scene!'? What the heck is this!? You've gotta be kidding if you think an idol like me can do that! I've still got 12 years before you can consider me a borderline case ♡" I shouted in agitation.

Then, just next to me,
I heard someone speak in my ear.

"Hmm, bathing scenes? Sounds like your readers have their minds in the gutter," came a cool, hard voice, like a lake frozen over with ice.

M-Maki-chan, my colleague at μ's!?
Her gaze was keenly focused on the screen of the cellphone in my hand, as if she hadn't even noticed me having a heart attack... Aaaaah, not good!

I fumbled to close the screen, Maki-chan grabbed it out of my hand, as if she'd already known what I'd do.

"Waaaaah! Wait, no, give that back!"

I pounded against Maki-chan's back frantically as she turned away and started reading the display... and then, with a whoosh,
Maki turned back to me.
For a moment, I wasn't sure what to do, but...
Hyaah! early bird gets the worm! Preemptive strike!

"Come on! Didn't anyone teach you not to look at other people's cellphone's without permission!? That's just gonna get you some heartbreak when you scare your future boyfriend off! But don't come crying to me when that happens!"

As I made a big show of anger,
"Hey, it says here that we at μ's are your stepping stones... What's that supposed to mean!?"

That's one scary face.
Eeek, Maki-chan is so intense at times like this.
Like an ice-cold smile, or a hannya mask ♪ I bet she'd just get madder if I said that. So I don't say anything.
[Hannya mask: used in traditional Japanese theatre, depicts the face of a jealous and hateful demoness.]

"Well? Why aren't you saying anything? Actually, what's this blog about, anyway? I've never heard anything about it before, and you're went and written about us in here too!"

'The intensity in Maki's angered expression is so cool. And now that I get some time to look at it, she's really got a pretty face after all,' I think. Then, suddenly,

"Hey Maki-chan, I know you're angry basically all the time, but out of all of us at μ's, that look actually looks the best on you! It must be nice to look so good! Not even anger can ruin your looks!"
I say, as if speaking on autopilot. It's a bad habit of mine that I always speak my mind!

"Stop trying to change the subject!"

Ooh, she's mad.

"Sorry, sorry! I didn't mean to!"
I feel a bit depressed.

"Really, I'm sorry. But I wasn't trying to hurt anyone. I'm just continuing my old blog. I mean, right now, μ's is pretty much my entire life. If I don't write about you, then there's nothing else to put there," I say as I rack my mind for a follow-up.

"Forgive my selfishness, okay? Oh, that's right. You're the princess of the Nishikino Hospital, so it's only natural you wouldn't want people going around writing whatever about you on the internet... Sorry, I'm just a regular girl, so I didn't even realize..." I say as I revert the browser back to the start of my blog and place the phone so that the screen is visible. As I glance upwards to peek at Maki-chan...

"I... it's not like I was going to say anything like that."

Oh, she's falling back!
Hooray ♡ Just as I think I've managed to play her,

"Hm? Wait a minute. I'll bet..."
Maki-chan grabs my cellphone again and starts scrolling.

"Now that I check again... Yeah, it's right there! You're going on about how you joined μ's just to further your own idol career, that you're not even sure we're gonna make it as idols, and that you're the cutest!"

Shaky shaky. Maki-chan's welling up with magma again.

"Just what the hell do you want!?"
Eeeek! It's an eruption! ♡♡♡

I scream and throw myself back, as if pretending to be blown away by Mount Maki's eruption. Then, as I try to flee,

Click.

The door opens right in my face as I plot my escape.

"Hey there! Time for another day of practice!"
"This is unusual. Nico, Maki, are you two the first ones here today?"
Rin-chan and Umi-chan enter.
Followed by...

"They seem to be getting along really well these days ♡"
"Wow, really? I didn't notice a thing! Maybe it's because Maki-chan's an only child, and Nico-chan's like a senior and big sister to her! Not that she looks the part, though!"
Filled with some irrational exuberance, Kotori-chan and Honoka-chan flash a peace sign.

"Oh my, so out of all the people she could have chosen, she went with Nico, rather than an actual big sister like myself? I'm hurt ♪"
"Really? But, if you just imagine pairing Makkii and Elichka up, it's too high-level to be interesting. I think the unexpectedness of Makkii and Nico is pretty good, though? What about you, Hanayo-chan?
Eli-chan comes in, with Nozomi-chan after, and Hanayo-chan in the back, as if in

hiding.

With a timid nod, she answers, "I think Maki-chan just somehow feels like she's more relaxed and enjoying herself when she's with Nico-chan ♡"

Eeek! Nice one, Hanayo-chan ♡♡
I inadvertently spring up and towards Hanayo-chan, but someone's grabbing onto my skirt.
It's Maki-chan, her face trembling in rage and embarrassment.

"Hold it! Could you all just stop running your mouths!? Nico's not the big sisterly sort you think she is. She's actually a two-faced jerk who's been keeping this blog in secret, see!?" Maki-chan says, thrusting out my cellphone for all to see, like it's the stampbox from Mito_Kōmon.
[Further reading: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mito_Komon]

They all raise their voices in shock.
"Nico-nii's Love♡Nico World Idol Blog!?!?" they shout in unison.

Oh no.
And I just told her not to show off other people's cellphones.
I raise a hand to shield myself from the gazing eyes.
Why me? My cover's finally been blown.
My secret idol blog.
Lord, have mercy...

♡♡♡♡♡

"Wow, I've never met a real, live blogger before! Awesome!"
Honoka-chan's shriek is the first response.

"That's such an idol thing to do! And the design is so cute too ♡"
Kotori-chan's eyes are glowing.

"So you can gather daily information from these sorts of places?"
Umi-chan speaks with an impressed tone, and Rin-chan jumps with joy.

"It says our eyes are all shining like stars here! She's gotta be talking about me☆!"

Hanayo-chan's eyes are widened in surprise.
"I can't believe you can do all this after all that exhausting practice every day!"

Eli-chan laughed at the sight,
"School idol intimate documents? That sounds like something Nico would do, hehe. And it might be true that Nico stands out the most as a character. We 'smalltime' school idols at Otonoki could do well to learn from her example."

Nozomi-chan responds too.
" 'A skilled hawk hides its dreams,' huh? That's for sure ♡ It's true that idols are

more popular than ever these days, but, if you want to pull a winning lot, it's better to go overboard than to be stingy. I'm impressed that Nico did all this without telling anyone else ♪ Oh, I know, how about we all take turns writing on the blog and take some of the weight off Nico's shoulders?"

Everyone cheered.
Saying things like, 'I'd expect nothing less from Nico,' 'I only wish I could be so good with computers,' and 'maybe we should put Nico in charge of our digital networking.'
Apart from that...
There was nothing.
Maki-chan and I just stared blankly at the scene.
Then, quietly,
"But she even said that μ's are just her stepping stones, and we're smalltime, and all other sorts of..." she mutters.

Nozomi-chan claps her on the back with a smile.
"It's not just for Nico-nii. We're together in μ's so that we can be stepping stones for all the others. We work our way to becoming greater school idols, one step at a time. That's how μ's operates. And, it's an unfortunate fact that Otonoki is small time..."

On the other side, Honoka lets out a mighty roar while she looking at the phone.
"And that's why! We're gonna make it into the bigtime! And stop the school from closing! We're gonna take our next step together, with a smile, and save Otonokizaka Academy ♡!"

Maki-chan's shoulders drop in response to Nozomi-chan's giggling, and she sighs.
"Well, I wasn't actually, like, mad or anything. It's just..."

As she speaks with a bitter smile, I can already hear what she's trying to say next.

"It's just, I had this urge to act like an honor student, like I always do. I didn't think you'd all react this way. But, now that you mention it, I might have overreacted a bit... Ugh, fine! I know I can never match up to you guys in this!"

Ehehe ♡ I was right on the money ♪

But, the sight of her fumbling in embarrassment was just too cute for me to resist.
I just had to give her a big hug, saying,
"You're just so cute, Makkii ♡ Don't you worry! I think you're fine just the way you are! So, I'll be writing lots and lots about you on my blog from now on!"

As she stares in shock, she begins to say something...
And then stops, resisting with all her might... But it didn't work.

"Ugh, jeez! If you're not going to do a proper job of promoting μ's, then I'll do the writing from now on! You might not think I'd be a good writer, but..."

Her face turns red.

Giggle.
She's just too adorable ♡
Messing with Makkii is so fun, I'm addicted ♪

♡♡♡♡♡

Starting the next day,
All of the members of μ's began taking turns writing on my blog, with me managing their uploads.
Teeheehee♥

It feels like I'm some sort of authority figure now!
And, with my iron grip on our blog, I'll quietly boost my presence!

And so, I'll be starting up Shadowy Commander Nico-nii's Number One Idol To Be / School Idol Secret Blog today.
I'll be updating daily with your support ♥

I'll be teaching you how a school idol's life really goes, so I hope you enjoy ♥

★Coming Up Next★
Thrilling Secret Special Training for Team SM!?
See you soon!

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Comments ♡ Maki
I-I'm not exactly impressed with Nico-chan the way everyone else is! Rather, I just feel impressed that everyone else is totally fine with it. It kinda surprised me and made me feel like I'm real narrow-minded or... Anyway, there's nothing special about Nico-chan to me! And if we're writing a blog, I'm more suited to the job ♡ Just leave it to me ♪

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Chapter 3: Nico Nico Nii

"Nico nii, nico nii, nico nico nii♪"

That is...
My catchphrase as Nico-nii, the best idol in the world.
But, I've actually sung it ever since I was a kid.
It's Nico's private theme song.
Ehehe♡

Nico nii, nico nii, nico nico nii♪
It's a rather simple, cute, and cheerful song that I like to sing
It fits Nico-nii perfectly.
But in truth, I didn't make it up myself. Back when I was just a little kid, my daddy made it for me.

Yazawa Nico.
That's the name my mom and dad gave me, in hopes that I would always have a smile on my face.
My dad would go, "Nico nico nii" whenever he said my name.
With a bright, happy smile, nico nico nii.
And when whenever we took pictures, too.
"Okay, I'm taking it now, Ni-co ni-co nii!"
And we would all smile together.
When I think about it, I remember all the times daddy would sing it to me.
Back when I was as small and cute as a doll, he would hold me with both hands and give me rides on those big shoulders of his.
As we walked down the hillside from the preschool, lit by the orange evening sun,
We would sing with smiles on our faces,
"Nico nii, nico nii, nico nico nii!
Nico nii, Nico nii, ni-co ni-co nii!
Smiling cheerfully, with a ni-co nico nii!
Smiling like the sun, with a ni-co nico nii!"

And when my dad sang, "nico nico nii," I'd feel his large body shake.
Then,
I'd go "nico nico nii!" along with him.

I don't know why, but it made me so happy.

It must have been a mix of knowing we'd go home soon, and feeling that Daddy and I could go anywhere in the world.
What would we eat today?
I hope it's Nico's favorite hamburg steak♡!
When we saw our house in the distance, Daddy would let me off his shoulders, and we'd walk together
Nico nii, nico nii, nico nico nii.
Playing hopscotch as we sang
And if we made it into the house right on the part where you landed on both feet, that meant today'd be a lucky day♪
A precious memory, from the very bottom of the bottom of the bottom of the bottom of my heart.
Thinking back on it, did Daddy make that song so that I'd always have a smile on my face?
He never needed to worry about that.
I mean,
Just look at me!
Even without Daddy, I'm always going nico nico nii with a smile on my face, just like he wanted!
Sometimes I look up to the sky and ask myself,
If Daddy saw Nico now, what would he think?
Even though he's not here anymore, Nico's family still smiles just like he did.

Giggle♡
I mean, it's too bad, but, anyone can see that I don't have that tall and beautiful model's body my mom does. I take after Daddy.
But, you know?
This daddy's girl is gonna live happily.
Because, Nico's definitely gonna spread this smile that Daddy gave her across the entire world, and become the happiest idol in the world!

On the way home after μ's practice session
I was spacing out just a little bit, thinking of that. Realizing that the sky was starting to get blurry, I rubbed my eyes.
Oh no, I'm starting to get a bit sentimental today.
That's not a Nico thing to do.
Awww.
Does this mean I've let my guard down?
I thought that I'd been cautious at all times, though.
(After all, life is war! You gotta fight to survive☆)
But these days, I feel like... I'm loosening up.
That's what the girls in class are telling me lately, too.
They say that Nico just somehow looks like she's having fun.
Well I'm a No. 1 Idol, so I should look like I'm having fun, but the nuance is a bit different, isn't it?

I've definitely let down my guard a little bit, and shown an opening. That's because those dull, drab days, the color of dead leaves, from before I met μ's, are gone.

Now it's a new age of nico nico nii.

♡♡♡♡♡

"Niiiiicoooo-chaaaan!"

Then, a wild, vibrant voice came from behind me.
I turned around, and...

"Oh, Honoka-chan"

There were the three juniors, Honoka-chan, Kotori-chan, and Umi-chan.
Taken aback, I rubbed my eyes once again, and then answered back, as if nothing had happened, "What brings you here? Did you need Nico for something?

My house is southwest from school, on the way to Akibahara station, while Honoka and Umi live in Ogawa-cho and Kanda-Suda-cho, in the opposite direction.
Just for a moment, Umi-chan's face looked like she'd noticed something. It felt like she'd looked into my eyes.
And the next moment, that suspecting expression was wiped away by Honoka's cheery voice.

"We were chasing after you, Nico-chan! We wanted to study outfits and dances from that mascot idol DVD you mentioned at practice today♡"

That brightened my mood a little.

"O... oh!? I knew you'd like it! You've got a good eye for these things! The mascot idol kinda feels like a B-lister, and the casting is a bit disappointing, but the setup caught Nico's attention! That full-body suit she wears is just revolutionary, and the way she comes out of it right in the middle leaves a lasting impression! And then there's that quirk in her speaking! Kids will find it hard to forget her, don't you think!?"

In response, Umi-chan lets out a bitter laugh, Kotori has an eager smile, and Honoka goes...
"You bet! That's so cool! And we don't have school tomorrow, so if you lend us that mascot idol DVD, the three of us can study those outfits, and-"

Hey, wait a minute.
Where is she going with this?
No, don't tell me...

"Um, sorry, but can you wait until next week? Nico-nii doesn't have that DVD with her today."

With that, I make my escape. I'm gonna be outta sight before they realize what I'm up to, like whoosh.

"Sorry, but I'm in a bit of a hurry, so, may next week-"

Before I can finish...
Honoka firmly grasps my arm, with a smile on her face.

"Don't worry! We won't take long ♪ We'll come along with you, and leave as soon as we pick it up. Oh, come to think of it, we've never been to your place before, have we? Wooow, I can't wait ♡ Where do you live? Aw man, and if you'd lived just a bit closer, you coulda gone to Otonoki Elementary with me and Kotori! That's too bad!"

Nico nico nii. Honoka's practically glowing now.

"Uh, um, my house is uh, kinda messy today..."

I lie to Honoka-chan with a smile.

"Aw, I that doesn't matter to me! My room's always pretty messy too!"

I glance over at Kotori-chan and Umi-chan, who exchange a nervous laugh.

"Well, I'd prefer it if that did matter..."

Says Kotori with a sorry tone of voice.

"You always take a bunch of μ's uniforms with you, after all..."

Then, Honoka came up with an idea.

"Oh, if you can't let us in, we can just wait outside! Don't worry, we'll be off as soon as we get the DVD☆"

Nico nico nii. She smiles innocently.
Ugh, come on! I don't even want you to come close to my house!
It'd hurt their feelings if I said that out loud, wouldn't it?
That's why they're so hard to handle.
Aaaagh, is Nico helpless before their innocence!?
Waaaah, Nico's got her back to the wall!
And so...
You can read the rest online♡
[I'm not exactly sure what this is referring to]

Comments♡Honoka

I love how Nico-chan sings her "nico nico nii♪"! Just saying that is enough to cheer me up♡ It must be nice... Now I want a catchphrase like that too. But something like "hono hono ho~♡" just sounds kinda stupid, doesn't it? Ehehe♪ I think the way Nico-chan can brighten the mood anywhere with just a nico nico nii makes her a valuable part of μ's arsenal! We've gotta do our part to μ's bigger for her sake too! Ohh ♪

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Chapter 4: Go Home!
I managed to escape them, but... it's past 6 PM now.
I stand in the darkness in front of my house.
Haah.
Nico-nii lets out a sigh.
Not just one of relief... Hm, it's maybe something like a 50-50 split with exasperation and shame?
Oh, if you give all three one half, you end up with 150%... That's kinda exceeded the limit. Oh well.
The good thing about nighttime getting all the time sales at the supermarket, like the 50% discounts and the 150% bonus-size packs ♡
Now Nico's heart's charged up to infinity ∞♪
... So I think to myself as I stand outside. I look up at my house again.
[Time sale: Refers to the discounts that Japanese supermarkets offer to clear out stock before they close for the night.]

Haaah.
Another sigh.
I was 100% shameful today. Perfect score. Sigh.
Nico lives near Akibahara station, but in a back alley coming off of the shop-laden main street.
Compared to the radiance of the main street, street lights are so scarce it'd make you do a double take.
And, Nico's house stands behind a high-rise building. Unlit by the sparse lighting, it's so dark I can hardly see the outline of the door.
The old-fashioned door, made of thin, rattling ground glass faces the door, and a yellow light comes out from the one window, in the kitchen. Combined with the clanking steel staircase outside, the mortar building looks like something out of Doraemon or Sazae-san. Like some old lady's countryside home.
"Aaagh, if only Nico lived somewhere just a bit nicer!"
That phrase, one that I'd said maybe a few hundred thousand times as a kid, came to my lips once again.
Maybe then, I'd be able to invite Honoka-chan and Kotori-chan and Umi-chan over.
Then I wouldn't have to be so desperate to distract them, shake them off, and escape.
It's a bit sad,
But I understand.

The simple fact that we can live in Akibahara at all means that we're not exactly destitute.
Our house may be old, but it's more than enough to live in. And, although it can't fit more than a bed and desk, I technically do have my own room.
I wonder if this is punishment.
The vain, pleasure-seeking Nico's punishment.
But, no matter what I do,
I just can't help but think the way modern girls do.
Not like I want a bed with a canopy, though.
I just wish I had a house that looked a little bit - just a little bit - nicer. One that I wouldn't be ashamed to show my friends.

Ever since I was young,
I'd hesitate whenever my friends asked me where I lived.
I didn't really know why I did myself, but,
Still, somewhere inside, I'd thought,
Nico's, like, an idol, right? She's conscious of how she looks, right?
So I'd at least want a nicer-looking... No, I'll say it straight this time! A more expensive-looking house. That's how I'd thought.
Because... well, it doesn't suit Nico's image.
This old, broken-down little house.
I can't bear to show anyone that I live here.

Aaaagh, if only Nico could be the first daughter of some established store, like Honoka-chan, or the successor of some big dojo, like Umi-chan, or live in a fancy apartment as the chairwoman's daughter, like Kotori-chan, or the princess of some private hospital...
How nice that would be!
Then, I'd be able to use that as my selling point and make my debut as a 2nd-generation idol much sooner.
Wait, what is a 2nd-generation idol!?
What am I, some sort of celeb?
Tee hee... Ah, but that would be so nice. A doctor, schoolmaster, chairwoman, or lawyer... A VIP-class, working, 2nd-generation idol ☆
Making my move as a local, downtown idol might be a good idea ♪
I laugh to myself.

"I'm back!"

As I remove my shoes at the small concrete entrance,

"Welcome back!"
"We missed you, Nico!"

Two cute little voices come out from the back.
Followed by the pitter patter of running feet.
Pow!
Looking down with a strained smile, I see the two cute little creatures burying their faces into my waist.

"We missed you, Nico!"
"I'm hungry, Nico!"

They raise their heads to to speak, revealing soft, chubby faces, like that fish-girl from Ponyo.
Just as cute as ever ♪
I laugh as I set my bag down and enter, quickly reaching for the apron on the kitchen wall.
Looks like I don't have time to change out of my uniform today, either.

"Sorry, practice took a while today, too. Wait just a moment while I make dinner, okay?"

The two little Ponyos dance and cheer, "Hooray, hooray, dinner, dinner ♪"
Giggle.
It makes me wonder, was I like them too when I was their age?
My cute little twin sisters, with faces quite similar to mine.

♡♡♡♡♡♡

"Today's dinner will be whitebait fried rice and egg sou. Be sure to finish your sprout and seaweed salad too, okay?"

While Kokoro respondes with an enthusiastic yes, Cocoa makes a slightly reluctant expression.

"Sprouts and seaweed again? I wanna eat strawberries!"

S... strawberries!? We can't have something that expensive on a regular dinner! I think as I make an excuse.

"Oh, really? Maybe next time, okay? I didn't buy any tonight, but instead, I'll make the salad special and add your favorite tuna, okay?" I say while desperately trying to recall a single piece of information: do they even have time sales for strawberries?

While thinking such housewife-ish thoughts, Cocoa points to the salad plate with a smile.

"Oh, you mean the one with mayonaise? I love that! Thanks, Nico-chan ♡"

As Cocoa starts bouncing up and down in front of the dining table, I pat her head to calm her down.
There, there, there... Honestly, you're just so cute and energetic, Cocoa ♡
Watching, Kokoro puffs out her cheeks in anger.

"No fair! Pat my head too, Nico!"
Giggle... I inadvertently let out a dry laugh.
That's right, Kokoro's obedient, and always does what I tell her, but that doesn't mean she doesn't want any attention.

Nico loves kids who make express their opinions like that!
So I think as I start patting Kokoro's head too ♡

"Nico-nee loves how you're never picky about your food ☆"

My cute little sisters really do resemble me in certain ways.

"Now, Mommy's going to be out late tonight too, so let's eat. Oh, and maybe we should bathe together tonight, too ♡"

I roar and strike a pose like monster from a kaiju film, prompting the two to start laughing and frolicking.
Aww, that didn't work. Maybe I went too far.

"Come on, you two! You'd better eat your soup quickly, or else it'll get cold!"

"Okay, Nico!"
"Sure, Nico!"
The two answer with angelic smiles, and dig right in. After a while...

Vzzzzzzzzzz.

My cellphone starts shaking.
I sentenced it to an eternity in vibrate mode so my rambunctious sisters don't answer it for me.

"Oh? Nico-chan, your phone's ringing. Is it Mommy? I hope she comes home early today ♡" says Cocoa with yellow bits of fried rice stuck to her face.

Ack, now they've realized the phone can vibrate, too...

"Really? But you said she'd be busy all week so we'd have to eat dinner by ourselves!"

Caught off guard, I leave the spoon in my mouth as I lift up the phone to check the caller number.

"Aaaaaaaaaagh!!"

http://i.imgur.com/qbsJonM.jpg
(My underclassman from μ's!
Honokacchi♡)

The jolt of shock makes me drop my phone. What could she want at this hour? Does she have something else to ask?

"What's wrong, Nico? Did a ghost call you? Did he tell you Mommy isn't coming home?"

Kokoro and Cocoa look at me with worried expressions.

For a moment, I consider leaving her hanging, but for some reason, I decide against it.
Slowly, fearfully, I reach for the phone again.
Aaah, but I shouldn't have after all.
Because, of all the things for her to say...

"Oh! Nico-chan! Are you alright!? We were worried because you just vanished all of a sudden while we were talking! We thought that maybe you got abducted by a UFO, or spirited away, or something, and we'd become witnessed a close encounter of the third kind! Umi-chan was telling us to call the pol-"

I stifle a laugh as I hear Umi-chan interrupting Honoka-chan with a smack on the head.

"Oh, Honoka-chan? Yeah, sorry about that. I was thinking of showing you to my place, but someone I knew called out to me, and then we got separated, so I went home by myself."

That's a bit too far-fetched, even for me! But Honoka-chan's response to this obviously fake excuse floored me. Literally.

"Oh, that's all? Phew! You see, we're actually standing right outside your place, 'cause Kotori-chan said she knows where you live. But, after squeezing in here, we're having a hard time finding your house, right? We're just behind UDX, so how do we go from-"

I jump up with a crash.

"Stop! Stop stop stop stop stop stop right now!! You can't come over!!! Um, uh, just, er, w-wait right there, and I'll come over right away!"

With that, I hang up.

I take off my apron in a great hurry and rush to the ent- Oh right, the mascot idol DVD! I run into my room to grab it.
Give me a break! I can't believe they're making me do this! I'll never talk about mascot idols ever again! They have their strong points, but they're nothing more than idols that bring disaster from within those suits!

"Sorry! Nico's gotta go out for a minute, so just eat your dinner and wait for me to come back!" I shout to Kokoro and Cocoa as I put on my shoes and dash out the door.

And then,

Not even a dozen meters from my house, I see Honoka-chan and her friends turning the corner. My hopes are dashed.

"Aaaaaaahh!!"

"Oh, Nico-chan! So you were here after all ♡"

Argh, not even hearing Honoka-chan's carefree voice is going to calm me down.
Despite what you'd think, I'm not all that great at ad-libbing!
Honoka's done nothing wrong, but I hate her anyway.

Maybe I look like I'm troubled, because Kotori-chan asks me with a worried look,

"Sorry for coming around so late. Did you have plans?"

As if trying to apologize. As if expecting something of me.
Crap. Kotori-chan has formidable intuition. Do I smell like I'm keeping a secret or something?

"Um, um, no, not really, it's just-"

I'm cut of by the sight of Umi-chan... doing... what!?
She's sniffing around me with her eyes closed!

"I smell something nice. Like the pleasant smell of cooked fish. Sorry, were you in the middle of a meal?"

The three of them let out a yell.

"Aaaah! Really!? Sorry for being so thoughtless! You don't have to come out for us! So then, where do you live, Nico-chan?" Which one of th-"

As Honoka-chan starts to look up at the buildings around us, I immediately point in the opposite direction, towards the shopping district.

"Oh, actually, Nico lives allll the way down ther-"

And then they called out.

"Nico-nii!"
"Nico-nii, your soup's getting cold!"

The two voices come from behind.

"How cute! Twins!"

Honoka-chan beckons them over as if playing with a puppy.

Ugh, and I'd told them to wait inside...
Paralyzed with shock, I couldn't find anything to say.
Once they realize that the Honoka-chan and her friends are here, the two hide themselves behind my skirt.

"Are they your friends, Nico-nii?"

"Um, y-yeah, you see, they're my friends, but..."

My voice is drowned out by a voice 100 times louder. Kotori-chan's voice.

"A-are these really your twin sisters!? Oh my gosh! They're just too cute! And they're wearing matching clothes, too ♡♡♡"

I can see hearts in her eyes.

While taken aback by Kotori-chan's excitement, Umi-chan's face has the same surprised look.

"I never knew you had little sisters. Are they twins?"

Soon, their astonished stares turn to smiles, and they crouch down to eye level with the twins.

"Hey there. Nice to meet you."

As the twins wriggle nervously, they continue.

"You look just like Nico ♡"

D-do they? That's the first time anyone's said that.
After all, I've never let anyone see them before.
My heart skips a beat.
But, I feel a bit of anticipation
As I let out a breath,
The twins jump with joy.

"We're Kokoro and Cocoa, and we love Nico-nii ♡"
"We've never met Nico-nii's friends before, but you're nice!"
"Come eat dinner with us!"
"We've got tasty whitebait fried rice today! I'll share some of mine with you!"
"Oh, then I'll give you my seaweed and sprouts salad! I don't wanna eat sprouts every day anyway!
"Stop being so picky, Cocoa! Nico-nii worked hard on that salad!
"Who are you calling greedy?"

The two start to talk amongst themselves.
Umi-chan laughs.
And so do Honoka-chan and Kotori-chan.
Honoka-chan says loudly,

"You sure are lucky to have such cute twin sisters, Nico-chan! You shouldn't keep them to yourself ♡! I'm sooooo jealous!"
These little sisters, who tell everyone that you eat sprouts every day?
Are they really something to be "sooooo jealous" about?
Ehehe ♡

♡♡♡♡♡

After I handed over the DVD, the girls declined my little sisters, telling them it was too late and they had to go home.
Of course, they promised that they'd definitely come play another day.
Clearing her throat, Kokoro proudly declared that they'd play othello together next time. The twins looked with amazement at the candy that the girls gave as a goodbye present.

"Nico-nii's friends are all real nice!"
"They gave me a piece of candy! I hope they'll bring two more next time ♡!"

"That's right. They're all nice girls."
As I answered, I thought to myself.
Will I be prepared for all of them to know what kind of house I live in by the time they come back? I'm still not sure.
If it's them...
Although the idea crossed my mind a few times before,
Still, I feel hesitant.
Nico-nii. The vain, The pleasure-seeking.
If I make it as an idol.
Then maybe one day, I won't have to feel this way anymore.
With a strange swaying sensation filling my heart,
The three of us went home.

Comments ♡ Kotori
Honestly, Nico's little twin sisters, Kokoro-chan and Cocoa-chan are just too cute! ♡♡♡♡♡ They stole me heart from the moment we met ♡ As an only child, I'm so totally jealous! Oh, I know! I'll make them some matching outfits! Oh, but would Nico-chan be fine with that? Hm, then I'll just make one for Nico-chan, too! The three of them in matching maid uniforms ♪ Let me join the fun too! ♡♡♡

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Chapter 05: Winter Wind.

The chilling wind continued to blow, as it had since morning.
As if heralding the end of autumn and the coming of winter.

"I guess it's about time I buy a coat," I mutter to myself in the silent hallway.

I start to space out.
What kind of coat should I get? I've got to consider this carefully, since I can't afford to buy more than one. Last year, I'd eventually settled on getting a furry mods coat, but this year, I want one of those vibrantly-colored coccoon coats that are all the craze right now. No, rather, I should be looking for something that goes with just about anything, like a plain gray or navy A-line. But after weighing all my options, I decide on a white duffel coat, or...
I think to myself as I sit alone in the waiting area of the hallway.

The seats lined up along the classroom-side wall are empty.
I'm the last one left.
Bored, with nobody to talk to, I just kick my feet and wait.
As I look at the brush writing on the sign stuck to the door, my thoughts wander into the past.
Image: http://i.imgur.com/BZ9fuU1.png

♡♡♡♡♡♡

I'd always wanted to be an idol.
I'm not sure why, because I've been this way for as long as I can remember.
I'm sure part of it was because of those dazzling outfits they wear, how they stand on the stage as the center of attention, and the sensation of singing and dancing.
I guess it's like, I don't think there's a single girl in the world who wouldn't want to be an idol.

I mean, Eli-chan was so against it at first, but in the end, she became a school idol too ♡
All we had to do was go like, "you've got what it takes to be an idol," "You just have to take one step across this line," and "Please, please, become an idol!"
I don't think anyone in the world would be able to pass up that chance.

Not even Eli-chan. Not even Umi-chan.

Not a girl in the world.
No, maybe it's not just girls?
Gay boys love idols too, and even guys are really into idols.
Right?
Nobody on earth hates idols ♡
They just give up, thinking that they can never become idols.

Not that I don't understand their hesitance.
But I don't like it.
So I decided a long time ago that I'd become an idol, no matter what.
Not a pâtissière, not a flower grower, not a preschooler, not a doctor, not a CEO, not Doraemon... Wait, that last one might come close... No, not a single one of those!
The only thing I'll settle for is being a real idol.
If I dance, and sing, and shine on TV, if everyone praises my cuteness, and if I can spread my best smile across Japan.
Then maybe that will reach Daddy someday.

After all, my smile is the greatest in the world.
Nobody can beat my nico nico nii ♡

So I put in the effort to match.
Of course, the quickest way to become an idol is through auditions.
But, for an elementary-schooler to find auditions itself was a challenge, and while other children had their parents take them there, Mommy was always busy with work and rarely came home, so I got around by following my friends and their parents.

I got accepted as a research student a few times, but in the end, there'd be lesson and registration fees to deal with.
Plus, pretty much all of them take ballet or cheer or piano classes at the same time.
But Mommy was always working so hard, always coming home late, and never seemed to have any free time. I couldn't tell her, not on my life.

Oh, but in her defense, she'd buy me shoes, and uniforms, and anything else I needed if I asked, and I got a monthly allowance, so I don't think it's like we were really impoverished.
But, like, even a kid would understand, right?
We couldn't afford to waste anything.

Even if it were my dearest dream that we were talking about.
And, I was just an elementary-schooler.
If I were to seriously try and become an idol, I'd have to go to all sorts of expensive extracurricular lessons and stuff. It would feel like a completely different world.

So, I diligently saved my allowance... and, when I was in 4th grade,

I finally joined a children's theatre troupe.
It was a long-standing group, consisting of local volunteers, who were holding a one-year class exclusively for local children.
A light, economical, experience-building exhibition course for local children only, and with no registration fee, all you needed was 2000 yen a month for the lessons.
'My big chance has finally come!!' I thought. I jumped at the opportunity, and Mommy allowed it, thinking it would be an enriching experience, and so, I began attending lessons twice a week.

I didn't miss a single day of this precious opportunity.
Because, if I gain recognition here, if I catch someone's attention, then maybe I'll get recruited as a permanent member. And, experience aside, being in a theatre ensemble might get me chances to appear on stage or on TV.

I went to practice with a wide smile.
My first real dance lessons.
And lessons to find what angles made me look cutest, lessons on walking emphatically, and formal singing lessons.
It was my first experience with theatre... And I loved every second of it.
The acting, the singing, the dancing... It all fit me perfectly.
So I thought, 'This is it.'
This is the path for me.

Before long, the chance for me to realize my dreams came.
The auditions for the children's parts for a famous musical..
After entering the troupe, I'd earned praise from the head, and managed to make it through the final test.
I was the only one left from my course.
My chest was trembling.
My heart felt like it could jump right out of my chest.

But, in the end, they picked two others.
They were two normal kids.
They paid a normal lesson fee, and were enrolled in a normal course.
Of course, it might have been that I just wasn't good enough,
But, back then,
I thought,
'That's how it goes.'
'Of course that's how it goes.'
It hurt.
It hurt so bad I wanted to cry.
But I knew that I shouldn't cry just because I felt hurt.
Because my worth didn't ride on something like this.
That was why.

And afterwards, I heard from the people at the office why I really lost.
It was because I didn't have teeth.
And in fact... I didn't.
At that time, I'd just lost two baby teeth, next to my front teeth.
And my new ones hadn't grown in yet.

But the two kids who got picked were about the same age. I when I asked about that, They told me that those two had been in a theatre troupe from an early age, so whenever their teeth fell out, they got fake ones put in.
Really? I never knew.
But even if I did know, fake teeth sound really expensive...
Like, in magazines, they talk about how performers spend like a few million yen prettying up their teeth, right?
So I couldn't tell Mommy.
Not on my life.

But I didn't cry. Even if it hurts, I won't cry.
Because if I do, then I'll really lose.
I will never, ever cry.

And,
The days passed by as if nothing happened.
I entered a regular public middle school, and, as always, I signed up for auditions, beat out the second-rate lesson-taking students, and then couldn't enter because I didn't have money.
If you said that I wasn't being all that serious anymore... well, you'd be right.
After all, a lot of those auditions I went to were B-class gigs.
I thought, I've got the sort of talent that only comes around one in a century, so I'd be better off entering the scene with a bang rather than starting off as an underground idol.
I just have to wait for it.
I believed that soon, my true and honest big chance would appear before me.
More likely than not, I was serious about it.

Because, when I was graduating from elementary school, the performing arts high school UTX opened up in front of Akibahara station, with that fancy black skyscraper.
By the time I'd started thinking about where I'd go after middle school, A-RISE, the pride of UTX, and Japan's number-one school idols, had built up a reputation. And when I saw that, I thought, 'That's me!'
That's my real big chance!
That's the only place for me.
I've kept it a secret from the rest of μ's, but I've come to see their theatre many times.
So many, many times, and it nearly brought me to tears.
But I held it back. I was determined, from the bottom of my heart, to stand on that stage.
That's the only place for me, I thought. I'd really be able to dance on that stage.

And then,
The fall of my third year.
One day, after picking up an enrollment packet, I skipped the short way home in high spirits.
But the enrollment guide in the packet surprised me.
I had forgotten.
I'd stepped beyond my bounds.

I'd been too absorbed in the idea that I'd be going to UTX.
I never imagined there existed schools that cost 1 million yen just to register at.

Back then, I was far, far younger than I am today.
Otonokizaka Academy wasn't even on my radar.
It was that same old reason.
All because I didn't have money.
My big chance shattered to bits, and the door slammed in my face.

I was in shock.
I thought I was so sad I'd cry... but nothing came out.
I laughed a little, thinking that it was just too big of a shock for me to cry.
But now that I think back, I know I was wrong.
Now that I think back, the reason I didn't cry was definitely because that wasn't my real chance.
Somewhere within my despairing heart, I'd realized it instinctively.
It was an instinct that I'd become an idol, no matter what.

♡♡♡♡♡

Clatter, clatter, clatter.
The classroom door opened.

The thick smell of perfume.
Out came a woman in a beautiful beige suit, accompanied by her daughter, the girl who went in before me.
"Huh? Where's your mom, Nico-chan?"
"She's busy with work today ♡" I winked back.
The girl's mom looked at me with a face that said, 'that must be rough.'
It's rough all right.
It's rough, but Mommy's the one having the hardest time here.
I can handle this counselling conference myself, no problem!
I made a smile and stood up to enter the room.

Inside were my homeroom teacher and the vice-principal, who was in charge of career counselling.
They were both middle-aged ladies.
My homeroom teacher prompted me to sit down.
"Hmm, Well then, you're the last one, right, Yazawa-san? You said your mother couldn't come due to work. According to your career aspiration questionnaire, after graduating, you're, er..."
She scans through the documents.
But, there's nothing there.

"It's... blank?"
The homeroom teacher frowns, and the vice-principal adjusts her glasses.
Teeheehee ♡
Hey, what can I do?
Back when I was filling out the questionnaire, I didn't have any aspirations left to speak of.

I'd began my last year of high school with resignation. Frankly, I if I couldn't get into UTX, then I didn't care what happened to me after graduation anymore.

With a troubled look, my homeroom teacher asked, "Well, have you decided what you want to do now?"

I jump up and say, "Yes, of course!"

Relieved, the homeroom teacher smiles.
I raise my voice and my hand.
Like a player pledging at Kōshien.
[Kōshien: Famous baseball stadium, location of the national high school baseball finals.]
[Players in a sport typically stand up and pledge to play fair before a game, apparently.]

"I am going to become an idol! No matter what anyone says, I shall continue on my honest path, and fight on until I become an idol!"

I see their jaws drop, and laugh a little.
I've got a talent for giving people an impact ♡
Teeheehee ♪

Now, I think that this is my big chance.
I've met Honoka-chan, Kotori-chan, and Umi-chan; Maki-chan, Hanayo-chan, and Rin-chan, and even Eli-chan and Nozomi-chan, who were the type that I honestly never thought I'd be friends with in my whole life, despite being in the same year.
And being a school idol like this, I can feel it.
This is my real big chance.
I'd been wandering all my life
So that I could come here.

Because, although I've never told anyone about this secret,
I've never had so much fun in my life!
It's better than when I was in the theatre troupe, better than when I went to all those auditions, better than when I went to UTX's theatre.
That uneasy, painful feeling in my heart is gone now.
Simply being with the rest of μ's,
And practicing with them is so fun.
That doubt I had deep inside me, which I didn't want to admit, that doubt that I'd never become a idol, might be flying out to the end of the universe now.
Now, I can think about being an idol all I want.
I act as an idol, and play around with the other idols... I've never been happier in my life.
Even with me the way I am, I can become an idol.
No, I'm already an idol!
So, I'm sure that from now on, I'll be able to show my best smile to the world.

Nico nii, nico nii, nico nico nii ♡
I'm gonna become the greatest idol in the world!

So, keep cheering me on until your hearts give out♡!

Comments ♡ Nozomi
Wow, I can just imagine homeroom teacher's surprise and the vice principal's elegance. That's Nico-nii for you ♪ She can say whatever comes to mind and it cheers me right up ♡ Being an idol's a fine goal in life. It's every girl's dream, after all ♪ But won't this draw attention to μ's? Giggle ☆ Elichi's gonna get angry again ♪ Alright, , maybe for my next conference, I'm should take a page from Nico-nii's book and go, "I am going to be an idol"? A shrine priestess or fortune teller wouldn't be bad, either ♡

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Chapter 6: Nico and μ's

Ever since this morning...
I've been feeling kinda hot.
But, I can't slack off just because I feel a bit out of it
As always, I help the little twins get ready, and send them off shortly after Mommy leaves for work. Then, I eat breakfast as well, and get ready for school...

Ugh, I can't take this anymore.

I can remember that thought running through my head,
But I don't have any memory of what happened after.
The next thing I know, I'm back in bed.
Wriggle, squirm. I'm buried inside the covers like a hornworm.

S... so cold...
I feel a shiver running down my back.

It's the first morning of November. Fall is almost over.
I'm always ready to catch the latest viral trends, but this time, it appears I have caught a different kind of virus altogether.
I think such idle thoughts as I shiver in bed, still in my school uniform, with my blanket pulled up over my head.

Aah... It's a good thing I sent the kids off without incident first.
If they were still here, I wouldn't be able to lie in bed like this.
I'm used to being alone. Just give me a bit of rest, and I'll be back in no time.

Yep.
Come to think of it, lately, μ's has been busy making a new song and working on a promotional campaign.
I probably got too excited planning our maid café takeover campaign.

Then my memory skips.
Next... although I'm supposed to be covered in all these blankets, but my back keeps getting colder, and my face starts to heat up.

What...? I might have a fever.
But there's nothing I can do about that.
I'm too cold. All I can do is close my eyes and curl up inside my bed. like a boiled prawn.

I want... water.
But I don't have the strength left to get any, so I endure.

But, this is fine.
Mommy's always been busy at work, so I was often alone, ever since I was a kid. This is how it's always been for me.
Nobody's around to look after me. That's a fact of life.
At least it was, until my twin sisters were born.
In fact, just being able to sleep by myself like this, without a care in the world, that is all I want.

...

♡♡♡♡♡♡

I'm not sure when, but eventually, I fell asleep.
And then I had a weird dream.

I felt myself floating... and I went to heaven.
There, I met several cute, beautiful angels with white wings. And, strangely enough, they looked like the girls from μ's.
Giggle.

Oh, come on. Why are they angels now?
I'm the one with angelic cuteness here, I think feebly.
At first, I was like, wait, if I'm in heaven, then doesn't that mean I'm dead?
It seems that, just having freshly died, I couldn't fly too well, so I just floated around while they led me around and took care of me.

They changed me out of my wrinkled uniform and into pajamas,
Wiped off my sweat,
brought me ice packs from the freezer,
Heated some water and brought it into my room, humidifying it to soothe my throat...

The angels were like kind nurses.
I felt a little better.
Aah, but... I'm still thirsty.

"I... I want... water."

A quivering voice.
I realize it's coming from my throat.
Huh... is this reality?

My vision grows dark, and I realize that someone is holding their hand on my

forehead.
It reminds me of Mommy's hand.
A white, gentle hand.
As I open my eyes, I see...
Eli-chan!?!?

I instantly spring up from bed in surprise.

"What are you doing? You've got a terrible fever right now, so you need to get some rest"
I fall back down, but Eli-chan catches me.

Why... is she here?

As if reading my thoughts, she answers, "You were absent from school, right? I heard in the staff room that you hadn't contacted the school, so we came to check up on you. But, we didn't expect that you'd be sleeping with the door unlocked."

Did she just say "we"?

I frown with my eyes closed.

"Really, even if you've got a fever, you could at least lock the door. You don't want anyone coming in and stealing your valuables!"

That's Nozomi-chan's voice coming from the kitchen. I suppose she must be boiling water.

So she's... here too.

Eli-chan continues, "Yeah, if you're going to collapse, you could at least give us a call! If you ignored this fever, you could have gotten pneumonia!"

She sounds a bit angry... but far kinder than usual.
As my eyes remain closed,
I feel this throbbing in my chest... It must be in my head, no, it's because of this cold.

"We looked around since we weren't sure where you kept your pajamas. You're fine with these, right?"
I lift my eyelids just a little to check, and... oh, that's my tracksuit.
So Nozomi-chan...
I could almost laugh.

If they "looked around," then...
Rather, if those two are here at all, then that means...
I get even dizzier than I already am.
They've finally found my house...

Part of me is wonders what to do now.

The other part doesn't care anymore.
Even I'm surprised, but this illness has left me unexpectedly weak.
I just nod, and leave myself in Eli-chan's care.

I don't want to think anymore... No,
I feel like I don't need to think anymore.
I don't need to put up a front for them anymore.

Once again,
Eli-chan puts her hand on my forehead, and laughs.
"Did you know? There's an ancient Japanese tradition of laying on hands. If I use my healing touch like this, then it'll suck the fever right out of you."
Oh please, is she starting to turn superstitious like Nozomi-chan now? I'm too old to believe in those things anyway.
But, it's strange.
Even though I can't believe her, it makes me happy.
I let out a little laugh.
I wonder why.

Is this really happening?
Slowly,
I open my eyes, but they're not there. I must have been daydreaming
And then,

"We're back! We got the medicine!"

I hear someone shouting from the entrance.

"Shhhh! Nico is still sleeping! You will wake her up if you yell so loudly!" a sharp voice rebukes her.

"We got some extra ice, too. Is this enough?"
That's Kotori's soft, chirping voice. It's the three juniors.
That reminds me. Last time, they got pretty close to my house, and gave my sisters, Kokoro and Cocoa, candy.

Behind them, I hear more voices.

"Like I said, if we needed medicine, we should have just asked my dad."

"But Eli-chan thought Nico-chan wouldn't like it if we made too big a deal out of things..."

"Then just leave it to me! I'll use my kitty powers to force the sickness out of Nico-chan!"

"If you could do that, then we wouldn't have doctors in the first place, would we!? Honestly, is this really the time to be stubborn about this stuff. If Nico-chan really develops pneumonia, it might just be fatal, you know? I just want what's best for her."

Hah.
They really are all here to see me, I think half-consciously.

Before I know it, I see everyone's faces surrounding me.
"I've never seen Nico-chan this quiet before!" someone says.
They all share a laugh.
A refreshing new bag of ice cools my head.

I can hardly open my eyes anymore.
Someone reaches under the covers and holds my hand.

A gentle, white hand, like Mommy's.
I see golden locks of hair hanging in the corner of my eye.

"I know you can handle everything by yourself, like you've always done, but, although we might not be too dependable,"

Through my closed eyes, I feel my field of view going white.

"I want you to rely on us just a bit more, because you're our..."

I fall asleep before I can hear the rest.

So, I feel my closed eyes heating up.
And something is coming out. I must be really sick.
If I try to wipe it away, it'll just make my eyes swollen.
'I know that, but I have to rub it, no matter what,' I think.
And with the tears still flowing, I drift to sleep.

Oh, God.
It's like I'm really in heaven.
A heaven that's home to eight lovely angels.
Have I really joined their ranks?
My chest tightens as I wonder.
There must be some strange disease going through me today after all.

Comments ♡ Eli
Nico-chan's always messing around, but she's actually more sensitive to others than anyone else, and always works so hard by herself... or is that going to far? Heehee ♡ I'm sure she'd blush and run away if she heard that. But, the way she shoulders everything alone reminds me of myself a little bit, so I feel like I get where she's coming from. But I wish she'd let us carry some of the weight every once in a while. Regardless of what she thinks, we're a team, and it's one for all, all for one.